United Nations E/2008/NGO/11

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 May 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development

Statement submitted by Women's Federation for World Peace International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2008/100.

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Statement

Background

In support of the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and its intention to: Assess the state of implementation; explore key challenges in ensuring that the global consensus on sustainable development is translated into action at the national level; promote the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation (JPOI); contribute to the efforts to integrate the implementation of MDG7 with other MDGs; and consider recommendations and proposals for action, including new initiatives, the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) similarly worked to assess, explore, promote, contribute and further consider new initiatives, recommendations and proposals in its broad scope of work toward the fulfillment of the Millennial Development Goals (MDGs.) To this end, WFWPI submits this statement and its recommendations for consideration during ECOSOC's 2008 AMR.

Being on the ground in more than 50 nations worldwide, WFWPI staff and volunteers face the daily challenges of sustaining grassroots efforts to empower women and change lives. The micro implementation challenges WFWPI faces parallel the macro challenges of each nation committed to sustainable development.

The recommendations contained herein build on the experience of our women in the field as well as assessment and review of events such as the parallel event during the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women entitled, "Mobilizing Grassroots Partners to Finance Empowerment and Change Lives, One Woman at a Time."

Innovations

WFWPI volunteers and partner organizations continue to find ways to employ simple, practical, replicable methods that ordinary people can use to mobilize partners in the empowerment and improvement of people's lives. The specific projects underway and referenced are reviewed in our companion report of promising practices for the Innovation Fair 2008.

Here, however, we wish to clarify the nature of the innovative "vertical" components of WFWPI's approach, aspects that are not traditionally noted or assessed in sustainable development reports. Our staff and volunteers nevertheless pay particular attention to this dimension of sustainable development and consider it pivotal to their successes.

WFWPI has a clear philosophical framework that recognizes and makes central what we call the "logic of love." That is, essential to our conceptual framework is the recognition that the rights of human beings are derived from their essential nature, which is both spiritual as well as physical. One of the key ways we experience and talk about concerns of the human spirit is in terms of the human heart: love, compassion, desire, aspiration and so on. Recognizing that our human rights are rooted in our dignity as integrated spiritual and physical beings, when we address issues of sustainable development, WFWPI develops an integrated response that addresses both the "vertical" dimensions of the issue (human dignity, need for love and respect, compassion etc.) as well as the practical and technical "horizontal" elements of sustainable development. Moreover, while the external actions prioritize physical needs, the internal priority calls for WFWPI respondents to continually strive for the highest and best aspirations of the human heart to lead the practical work of our hands.

In essence what is referred to here as "vertical" describes the heartfelt awareness of the profound value of each human being as well as the deliberate intension to honor that profound value. This is done by attending to the whole person including the needs that dignify the human spirit such as love, compassion, hope, trust, aspiration, desire for peace and fulfillment. The reference to "horizontal" refers to the practical and physical needs and realities of human life.

This priority of heart that employs the "logic of love" is thematic to the work of WFWPI and has been most notable in our reconciliation work through the Bridge of Peace Sisterhood ceremonies that continue to make a significant contribution to reconciliation efforts between former enemy groups, whether the groupings are national, ethnic, racial or tribal. A natural result of this priority of heart is the awareness and understanding that all people belong to one human family. With this

perspective we naturally conclude that no one can be thoroughly un-conflicted and at peace when some among our family continue to suffer in poverty, disease or violence.

Therefore, when volunteers embark upon an endeavor of any kind, a key component that is engaged is the element of heart. Friendships are made. Sisterhood relationships are created across lines of difference be they enmity, education, language, culture, religion, ethnicity or economic class. Familiarity grounded in the movement of the heart is sought as the basis upon which the work begins. Naturally, work that is taken up includes commitments of the heart that reach beyond present resources, present understanding and even personal adequacies. However, as is evidenced in the history of the work of WFWPI, these limitations were temporary. The determination and commitment of heart found ways to gain access to the needed practical resources of funding, assistance, development of capacities and so on.

That is, the "vertical" foundation of the work of WFWPI staff and volunteers raised the line of sight and vision of those engaging in the work of development, creation and management of schools, microcredit projects, service-learning and more, and have since expanded many of these efforts into meaningful lifestyles and ongoing commitments that provide the foundation for sustainability. Global challenges are addressed in this way by personal vision, commitment and decisions. That is, the gaps in sustainable development can and should be filled by integrated actions that address both the vertical and the horizontal components of human development.

Implications for the global community

We are convinced that these underutilized vertical elements of sustainable development are largely overlooked today. However they are supported in the mandates of the United Nations Charter and here we wish to bring to the attention of the Member States again, the simple potency and strategic nature of developing a culture of heart, of friendship and good neighborliness.

Perhaps our historical familiarity with the words "friendship" and "good neighborliness" have led us collectively to underestimate their value and efficacy as we focused on more pressing issues of post-war and cold-war diplomacy and development. But perhaps we would all do well to look again at the extraordinary nature of this very ordinary concept of friendship to hold the world together in ways that law, reason and duty cannot.

To this end, we only need to re-read the Purposes and Principles (Article I of Chapter I) of the UN Charter. The Charter's second paragraph, second only to the articulation of the most urgent purpose of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, notes the purpose of the UN is to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.

This is no accident. The potency of friendship was clearly recognized as nations began to emerge from the ravages of war. With the complexity of human affairs, development and sustainability issues in the twenty-first century perhaps it is time to look again at and to integrate into the contributions to peace and development, the cultivation of friendships at every level and thus to take seriously, matters of the heart and the logic of love. Friendship goes far beyond the provisioning of information, services and the latest technologies. Friendships bridge gaps, making possible the otherwise implausible.

In conclusion, on the occasion of the ECOSOC 2008 Annual Ministerial Review during the High Level Segment, WFWPI recommends and encourages reflection on the crucial commitment to embracing and addressing matters of the human heart and spirit that are quintessential to true human dignity. By integrating the logic of love with provision for practical implementation, sustainability becomes a natural characteristic of development pursued by partners and friends. We have seen this approach empower and transform the lives of both server and served as well as create sustained and significant positive change in standards of living, quality of lives and advancement toward fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals.